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June 8, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you today out of grave concern for the safety and well-being of Laura Ling and Euna Lee, and to urge you to continue to work to secure their release from North Korea.

As you know, Ms. Ling and Ms. Lee were captured by North Korean authorities in March while filming a documentary about the plight of refugees along the North Korean border with China. While the specific circumstances surrounding their arrests are still unclear, it is apparent that their subsequent trials and sentences of twelve years of hard labor are an affront to the international community's basic notions of justice and respect for human rights.

My first concern is for the safety of these two journalists and for the families of Ms. Lee and of Ms. Ling, who grew up in the Sacramento area and who maintains strong ties to our community. It is imperative that the United States undertake a coordinated effort to secure their release. I am heartened by your public pledges to throw the full weight of your administration behind such an endeavor, and I pledge to do all that I can to work with you to end this unfortunate affair.

While this situation is yet another example of North Korea's willingness to flout international norms, it is also a stark reminder of the role that the United States must continue to play as a strong supporter of human rights around the world. When an incident such as this directly affects American citizens who are working to raise awareness of suffering refugees in a distant part of the world, it underscores the responsibility we have as a nation to create a future where human rights are universally respected and honored.

I know you agree that our nation cannot abandon these two accomplished journalists to an unjust fate. Thank you for all that you have done to help end the suffering of Laura Ling, Euna Lee, and their families, and I look forward to working with you to find a solution to this urgent crisis.

Sincerely,



DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress